

## **Beverly Hills**

Zachary Watkins  
Teacher: Sandra Cap  
Keller Elementary Gifted Magnet School, Chicago

Beverly Hills is a neighborhood on the southwest side of Chicago. Its neighboring neighborhood is Morgan Park. Beverly Hills was once called Blue Island Ridge. In the words of a local historian, "this prehistoric glacial ridge, which rises nearly 100 feet above the current level of Lake Michigan provides a spectacular setting for neighborhood homes."

In 1822 the Canadian Fur Trader named Joseph Bailly came to the area now called Beverly. The only settlement located in the area was a Potawatomi Indian village. A couple of years after Bailly's arrival, settlers started building rude log cabins. Next, settlers started building wooden farmhouses and planted fields of corn and wheat. The area was not officially owned by anyone until John Blackstone bought three thousand acres from the United States government in 1839. In 1844 John Blackstone sold most of his property which included his mansion and the property surrounding it to Thomas Morgan. Thomas Morgan owned the land known as the Blue Island Ridge; his land spanned 91st street to 119th street. In 1852 the Rock Island Railroad was built into the area of the Blue Island Ridge. This made investors very interested in the area. In 1867 a group of investors purchased the area from the Morgan family. The investors also purchased other lands in the area. The investors combined all the areas and named this suburb Washington Heights.

In 1884 the area known as Washington Heights was divided. One part of the area was named Beverly Hills. In 1890 the Beverly Hills obtained water and sewage service. Later that year Beverly Hills was voted into the city. This area was known as suburban living in the city. Between 1910 and 1930 building boomed in Beverly. The railway made it easily accessible to other places. The area was a New England Protestant community until 1924 when Saint Barnabas Catholic Church was built. St. Barnabas became the first Catholic Parish in Beverly Hills. The Beverly area attracted large families because the houses that were being built were spacious and could accommodate large families. Soon, more and more Catholics moved into the area. In 1972 African American families started moving into the Beverly area. At first the neighbors were trying not sell their homes to African Americans but soon that changed. Also in 1972 the Beverly Area Planning Association (BAPA) was reorganized. BAPA is a strong neighborhood organization made up of community leaders and local civic groups to keep watch over the neighborhood. In 1972, with the integration of African Americans into the Beverly area some of the residents tried to leave, BAPA urged residents not to move out of the neighborhood and not many did. More and more families, African American and others continued to move into the Beverly neighborhood.

Today the Beverly neighborhood is a beautiful neighborhood with lots of trees, beautiful homes and unique historical properties. The Beverly neighborhood is different from other neighborhoods in the city. The hills in Beverly make this neighborhood unique compared to other neighborhoods. Beverly has eighty-five percent houses compared to other neighborhoods which have quite a few apartment buildings in them. Also Beverly has a wide variety of the types of houses found throughout the

neighborhood. Many famous designers have houses they have designed in Beverly: Frank Lloyd Wright, George Washington Maher, Howard Van Doren Shaw and Walter Burley Griffin. Beverly is a racially diverse community. These are just a few reasons why Beverly is such a unique community.

The Beverly Community has historically attracted large families to the area because of the big houses and suburban style living right in the inner city. Also, Beverly has four public grammar schools located in the area all which score well on school report cards. There are about seventeen different churches and eight Chicago Park District Facilities. There are a number of extra curricular activities in which families participate. There are also nice restaurants and near by shopping. [From Ellen Skerrett, *Chicago*; student historian's interview with Harold Wolff, (Beverly Hills resident), Jan. 12, 2003.]